

THE *Final* Straw

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

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THE FINAL STRAW RADIO
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An interview withh Toby from Appalachians Against Pipelines and Madeline Ffitch, an activist recently arrested for locking down to a drill threatening to move the Mountain Valley Pipeline through Peters Mountain at Jefferson National Forest. We talked about the recent days of solidarity, direct actions against the MVP, repression of activists and related topics.

Website: <https://aapsolidarity.org>

Legal Defense Fund: <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/ap-plegaldefense?=2>

AAP twitter: @stopthemvp

AAP instagram and facebook: @AppalachiansAgainstPipelines

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the time and for the work that you do. I really appreciate it.

MF: Thanks for having us.

Toby: Thank you so much for having us.

TFSR: You can learn more including how to get involved and support the legal fund for folks struggling against the MVP at aapsolidarity.org or find the Appalachians Against Pipelines on social media. You can find some of Madeline's writings at madelineffitch.com.

Atlanta folks is that people going in started making connections with and advocating, using the platform, on behalf of other folks that were in one of the deadliest jails on Turtle Island. Not promoting themselves, but doing that to build community and to expand movement empathy and knowledge. That is the other side of what Toby was saying about repression and how it can be frightening. If we do it right, these connections across generations and across geographical constraints can really blossom into a wider quilt of defense. If we build projects that can do bail support, or that can do post-release support, or that can attempt even cop watching, or whatever mutual aid, all these things, just like defending a few specific ecosystems from getting a pipeline is going to spread out that defense to not contributing towards global climate change.

MF: That is such a beautiful thing to say. I would be remiss to not bring into this conversation that it can feel like cold comfort to say, “We’re in good company.” But I know talking to people in Atlanta, and hearing from people in Appalachia, and then remembering our history, on a practical level, it makes us stronger to remember our movement history, to remember that we are in good company, that people have been here before, to remember the Green Scare, to remember J20, to remember radical history before that. It can be comforting and also can provide practical ideas and help us with our radical imaginations. I know that those are some discussions that people have been having when we’re facing repression. Not to say, “Oh, this has happened before, it’s no big deal”. But to say, “It is a big deal.” And there are people who we can talk to, that we can have fellowship with, take comfort in the camaraderie of, and talk about new ideas for taking our chance and outmaneuvering. Radical people have always been good at finding openings and prying those openings open a little further. I don’t see any sign of us stopping doing that. This is a stubborn community.

TFSR: Recalcitrant even. Go ahead, Toby.

Toby: A final point for me is that, similarly, our movements are stronger when we realize both our shared power and our shared connections. But they’re also made stronger going through these things because it forces us to look back at shared history and also imagine new features together, imagine new ways of building resilience and how in an ever-changing and ever more scary and scary world, as looming catastrophe is on our horizon on so many levels, how we can survive together, and how we can build and be there for each other.

TFSR: Madeline, Toby, thank you so much both for being here and taking

TFSR: We’re joined by folks involved in the struggle against the Mountain Valley Pipeline to give us some updates on the status of the deadly project and the resistance to it. Thank you both for joining. Would you mind sharing your names, pronouns, and location or other information that you’d like folks to know?

Toby: Hi, thanks for having us. My name is Toby. My pronouns are they/them. I am currently on Monacan and Tutelo land in so-called West Virginia.

Madeline: My name is Madeline. I use she/her pronouns, and I’m in Appalachian Ohio right on the West Virginia border.

TFSR: Madeline, thanks for joining us. Toby, welcome back.

Madeline, I understand that on January 29th you were arrested for locking down to an MVP drill around Peter’s Mountain. Can you talk a bit about what happened?

MF: Sure, anyone who has a relationship with Peter’s Mountain or the land in that area knows how devastating it is for them to be drilling through that mountain. It’s also pretty absurd. I had the great privilege of spending the day on that mountain in the snow and the rain, mostly under a tarp, locked to that drill. It was beautiful watching the sunrise, and two hawks were flying overhead. Then there were a lot of police and security and workers stuck in the mud. It was interesting even to overhear the people we’re in opposition complaining and grumbling under their breaths about the terrain. It’s something locals have been saying for a long time. Appalachian people know that it does not make sense to be trying to punch these pipelines through these areas. It does feel beautiful to be up there and feel the land knows better. We already know that, but to really have it come home to us. For me being there felt like a gift because of that. The last time I was on Peter’s Mountain was when my younger child who’s seven now was a babe in my arms. I hiked up the Appalachian Trail to support the tree sets that were happening at that time. He was in diapers, and I camped out and provided moral support, and shouted words of encouragement to the tree-sitters. It felt really special to be able to come back and try to stop that drill for as long as I could.

TFSR: That’s awesome. Roughly for how long was the drill stopped?

MF: I stopped that for an entire workday. It was about eight hours.

TFSR: Hell yeah. That was probably really frustrating for both the locals and the people in the corporate office as you mentioned, with complain-

ing about the harsh terrain and everything. But in a public statement by you that showed up on the Appalachians Against Pipeline Facebook page, you talk about the inspiration gained from mothers in struggles to provide clean drinking water and safety for children. On your website, madelinefitch.com, I found articles you'd written about you and your family resisting other pipeline projects. You've already mentioned at least showing up to offer support to folks who are engaged in certain types of struggle. I wonder if you could talk about some of your experience of struggling against extraction on Turtle Island and a bit of what motivates you and what conversations you've had with other folks, motivating other mothers or other parents, for instance, to engage in what can be from uncomfortable to dangerous acts of eco-defense.

MF: Sure, it's pretty clear to me in late-stage capitalism and impending climate chaos that that's what's really uncomfortable and dangerous to families and to our children. It was important to me to be in solidarity with other Appalachian families that have been fighting this pipeline for a really long time. I'm close with several mothers and parents and families in Appalachia who, like our family, drink from a spring. Our family lives 200 feet from a pipeline that was proposed to be repurposed for high-pressure fracked gas, and luckily, people from all over the region on all ends of the pipeline fought really hard against that, and we did too. People we didn't even know. And that project was stopped. I know every day that I benefit from the fighting and stubbornness of a lot of other people who stand to lose a lot when these life-killing projects are pushed through to benefit a few rich people. I think it's important for me to stand up and do whatever I can. What I tell my kids is none of us can do everything, but we all have to do what we can. When we're together on this, we're stronger.

Everyone gets a little self-conscious when they read the quotes that they said, but I wanted to make sure people didn't think that I was saying that mothers are special in a way that in any way cooperates or bolsters this notion of motherhood as this specialized thing, especially white motherhood, this pure innocent moral authority. What I mean by motherhood as being a place from which I fight is that it's very, very clear to me that in the US, white middle-class parenting is constantly under pressure to be defined as something private, individualized, and atomized. That way of corroborating this middle-class narrative. That really goes against common sense and actual practical ways of running family and community where we're all really inter-reliant or interdependent. People all over the world know that. People in Gaza know that right now. It was really clear at Standing Rock. Indigenous and native communities on Turtle Island that are at the forefront of fighting these infrastructure projects have understood this as a concern that's inter-generational

we talked about the real action starts when you're in jail, and anybody who goes in jail for principled direct action and then spends their time in there thinking they're special or somehow the one who doesn't belong in there, compared to everybody else who's in there, that is somebody who I do not have an affinity with. Anybody who spends any amount of time inside a jail or prison with a heart or mind should come out an abolitionist.

When I was in jail, I noticed that people were speaking really clearly in there about how... My cellmate was saying, "There are more cops around, and they're coming after homeless people." She'd been picked up for charging her phone late at night at a gas station, and she'd been living on the streets for four years. They're not coming for the people who are with all of the money and the power who are making it impossible to live in these regions. They're coming for poor people. When people like us are in there, we're coming out and we're using community bail funds to help people get out. Well, now they're trying to criminalize community bail funds. In the places that I go to jail, most people are in there because they don't have anyone to post bail for them. They don't have phone numbers memorized. There's no support for people getting out. They're getting bail denied for total bullshit. They're in there for crimes of desperation and poverty for the most part. Women who are in there grew up in foster care and their kids are in foster care. It's a look directly at the way that the state has zero interest in doing anything except punishing people.

That's what the state exists for. They're going to be punishing us, and they're going to be punishing people with a lot less resources and a lot less supportive community than movement community usually has. And it's all connected. Even the way that the oil and gas industry routinely hires ex-felons in a situation where people who are convicted of felonies have a really hard time finding employment and so are pushed into really predatory fields where they're likely to get injured and they are not going to talk about what they're witnessing or what's happening to them, where there are few other options. I know that Mama Jules, before her action, has talked a lot about the way that man camps have impacted her community. The rise in drugs and overdoses for people in Appalachian communities, it's something a lot of Appalachian locals talk about when they're opposing the pipeline. And the wave of punishment and carceral approaches to people who are experiencing addiction and overdose in the communities where I live, that's what these police are doing. That's what the increase in carcerality is doing in these communities where we're seeing these projects be pushed through. And meanwhile, the big companies are getting glad-handed, getting whatever they want. That's something we need to look at when we're talking about repression and the way that the state is really trying to crush everybody.

TFSR: Those are all really good points. One thing that we saw out of the

In terms of these tactics that the state and the company are using right now, the way that they are coming after people, the way that they are having these looming lawsuits as threats against communities, against individuals, now's the time that it's really, really important to keep organizing and keep mobilizing and to continue to be vocal. It's not the time to withdraw because it's really scary. It's a time to reach out. It's the time to organize with your communities and with your crews to really push back against that kind of scare tactics and fear tactics. In other terms, direct on-the-ground response, support that folks here in this region are asking for, there is a legal defense fund that is supporting people who are going through bullshit legal situations. There are opportunities to support folks who are going to jail.

You can write to Jerome. He is not the only person who has been sentenced to jail time but is the only person who is currently incarcerated. So there are ways of supporting folks who are actively going through this repression and are being impacted by this repression, but in general, organizing crews and doing solidarity actions, or thinking about how you can fight back against that repression on an active level, as opposed to withdrawing, as opposed to being intimidated by those scare tactics, which is really hard to do. I say that as like "Oh, yeah. Just push fear away" as if it was totally easy to do. No, that's not easy to do. It is terrifying. It is scary. Scare tactics work because they're scary. Fear is a really common tactic to repress a lot of movements. But now the best way to support folks who are going through that repression is to think about how to build resiliency in your own communities and also to still show up for folks and still show up even when the stakes are way higher than they used to be.

TFSR: There's a link to the fundraising for legal support I know on the aap-solidarity.org website, as well as information from that group about ways to get involved on the ground, too. Do y'all have any words of solidarity that you want to share further beyond the ones that you have with the folks involved in the struggle to defend the Weelaunee Forest and Stop Cop City in Atlanta or any of the other cop cities that are threatening to rise up and be built around different parts of Turtle Island?

MF: I actually want to say something a little more about the carceral state and the people who are in jails not for stopping a pipeline, and how that's related to the way we're seeing repression happening too. I also want to keep in mind that when we see these waves of repression against justice activists and land defenders, there are a lot of unseen and continued repression that sometimes are related or rise at the same time and in connected ways to communities that are around where that level of repression is happening. I know that sometimes in direct action communities,

and touches every part of the community.

It's actually very rare and very specific and pretty purposeful when activism in the US is considered to be the territory of young people in their 20's, people who are unattached, or people who are white. The actual global history and ongoing story of people fighting against these life-killing infrastructure projects that are pushing us deeper into climate chaos and disaster is that the people who are standing up against that are our families, communities, and civil society. We all must show that that's who we are. We're fighting against forces that don't care about children, don't care about families, don't care if we have clean water to drink, don't care if people are dying under rubble and families are having bombs dropped on them. They really don't care about that. We need to be together and show who we are. It's a fantasy to believe that children and families are not on the front lines already. We're already on the front lines, especially where we live. I live in the lowest-income county in Ohio, in Southeast Ohio. And In Appalachia, people have been fighting back against the rich and powerful for basic livability. The industry calls our area a sacrifice zone, and the people at the forefront of that are inter-generational communities who've been fighting for such a long time just for the basics, for basic safety and survival.

How can we not see that commonality all over the world with people fighting struggles like that? It's no coincidence that as soon as the genocide started happening in Gaza, what we saw coming out of the pipeline fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Appalachia was immediate solidarity, unquestioning solidarity. It's because there's a common-sense solidarity with civil society against these powerful forces that really don't seem to care about everyday people.

TFSR: Yeah, absolutely. That's really well said, Toby, do you want to add anything? Any thoughts?

Toby: I don't think I can really add anything to what Madeline was saying, that was incredible. Thank you so much for sharing that. Speaking of the interconnectedness of our movements, something that I've found that to be true well before this is how not just our shared values and our shared commitment to resisting all forms of oppression, all forms of violence against our communities, binds us all together, but so do the actual people behind all the death and destruction, and violence, and all of the things that are actually binding us together in more ways than one. It's not that we have that shared sense of wanting to be in solidarity with each other, both on a local level and on a global level. It's also that we're fighting the same people when it comes down to it. Anytime that there is something evil going on in the world, anytime that there's oppression, anytime that bombs are falling and rubble falling, there's going to be someone profiting off of it. Every time there's a pipeline,

someone is going to profit off of it. Those people are the same people. They don't care about people on the ground. They don't care about frontline communities or any communities, to be honest. They just don't care. We are nothing to them. That is very daunting to think about, but also is something that, at least for me, helps bolster our resistance in that we do care for each other. And we are going to be the ones to take care of ourselves, our communities, and also each other's communities as well.

TFSR: Thank you. That's well said by both of you. Madeline's action fell within the date range of days of solidarity, a campaign that was being run against the MVP in multiple different places, anywhere people could show solidarity. I was wondering if you all have any insights into how folks near and far responded to that request for action and if there were any highlights that you want to talk about.

Toby: I can share a little bit about that call for action. There was a call for action across the world, probably more specifically on Turtle Island, based off of the banks investors, and companies behind the Mountain Valley Pipeline. There was a call for people to respond to both the wave of repression hitting folks on the ground in Appalachia who are using direct action to fight the Mountain Valley Pipeline, as well as this newest cycle of construction. There was a call put out to ask people to organize solidarity actions in their home communities.

A lot of that was based on this feeling on the ground here in Appalachia that things feel bleak, I have to be honest. You can't go anywhere in this region without seeing evidence of pipeline construction. From almost every major road, you'll see the pipeline, you'll see the scars upon the earth, you'll see active machinery digging up the hills and the mountains around you. You'll drive over creeks and rivers where they've either drilled underneath or their failures at building this pipeline has poisoned and polluted the waters, which locals and scientists and everyone with any logic in their brains have been telling them for years would happen. And still, they push through this pipeline. Also, to give people a sense, before May of 2023 and Manchin's involvement in the debt ceiling bill, people in this area thought that the fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline was going to succeed. They didn't have their permits to complete their water crossings. They didn't have their permits to go through the National Forest, which is where Peters Mountain is, where Madeline's lock-up was. They were doing poorly in the stock market. Then Joe Manchin, one of the West Virginia legislators, literally leveraged an entire global socio-economic crisis to get this pipeline built. Part of the debt ceiling bill was saying that Mountain Valley Pipeline would get all the remaining permits and that none of those permits and none of the other regulatory methods for limiting

and are pushing back against the status quo, as well as there are all of these wild projects that people are resisting and all of this oppression that people are organizing to stop. As people fight back, as people organize, mobilize, and are vocal and disciplined about their resistance, we're probably all going to see in the near future this continuing wave of repression. It's targeting people down in Appalachia. We're seeing people who for simple lockdowns, things that a year or two years ago would result in misdemeanors, people are catching felony charges, felony abduction and felony theft. We're seeing things people who are arrested, charged, bailed out, and then re-arrested on new felonies and on new charges at their arraignments. There are multiple cases where prosecutors and judges in both Virginia and West Virginia are saying that they are trying to seek jail time, like serious jail time.

Not only that people are seeing wild bails. Like Mama Jules' action, during this day solidarity, one person got a \$25,000 bail for one misdemeanor in Virginia, and the other person also for one misdemeanor—\$10,000 bail. That is obviously punitive. It is obviously the state coming after people for fighting this pipeline in a way that is credibly blatant and is very much a scare tactic. It's also something that this movement against the MVP hasn't seen as much. There have definitely been instances of the state coming after people, of the state denying bail as a punitive measure because the state is allowed to do that, especially in Virginia. There have definitely been instances where people have gotten felonies or been charged with felonies in the past, but we've never seen this widespread extreme targeting of every single person and ramping up of punitive measures for people who are doing nonviolent direct action. They are locking to equipment. It's not anything that, in the past, has produced this response from the state. A lot of movements are familiar with SLAPP suits, and a lot of people are familiar with what that means. Campaigns and movements have seen one SLAPP suit, but we have eight SLAPP suits in this region going on.

TFSR: Could you define a SLAPP suit for folks that maybe haven't heard the term before?

Toby: Yes, SLAPP stands for Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation. It is a civil lawsuit that basically is a way of linking a bunch of people in one fight together, and it's really meant to scare people away from participating in movements. The way the NDP is using it is that it is a threat against people who take direct action, that they might get added to this injunction, as well as people who support the MVP. There's also this underlying threat that even if they never locked down, even if they don't get arrested, they could still potentially get added to this injunction for their support, for their involvement, for them being vocal. It's a scare tactic and a threat that basically companies really love to use as a way of cooling resistance.

sacrifice and considered totally disposable why anybody with any common sense anywhere would trust the government. That's really not anyone's role. At the very least, people should be skeptical. But in this particular region, there's a long tradition of being highly skeptical of authority, of outside experts, of people who say they know best, and of people who have no connection to the land. It's really been beautiful to see the building solidarity between Appalachian people and indigenous people from other parts of Turtle Island coming together in this part of the world to move from more of a place of a land logic and also of a distrust of state and powerful interests. That is a major place that people fight from. It is uncharted by mainstream narratives about political orientations. In the US, I find it to be a very bracing and energizing, refreshing, and, frankly, noble, common-sense community to fight in.

TFSR: Hell yeah. As resistance ramps up, so is repression. Both of you talked a little bit about Jerome Wagner, who's catching the two months in jail. Can you talk about folks catching cases and what sort of asks there are for support? Madeline, what sort of legal repercussions are you facing at this point for your direct action?

MF: I'm really in the middle of all of this. Any platform I have right now, I'm using more to call for support for people who are facing more specific repression right now across so many movements. But I thought about that question and how best to answer it. Toby hopefully can say more on it. But there's a reason that you see so much solidarity, there are many reasons, but one of the things is in the face of all of the state repression if anybody thinks that the repression happening in Atlanta is not going to impact the repression that people in Appalachia are facing. Toby, I want you to say what we were discussing before the podcast, you had a lot of other examples, but anyone who's really paying attention notices that this repression impacts all of us, and the powers that are behind that level of repression don't see the edges of different campaigns or struggles. They are coming for everybody. We do have to really find solidarity and stand together on this.

Toby: I think, as Madeline was saying, there is a wave of repression going on right now that it's not just targeting folks here in Appalachia. It's targeting folks in Atlanta, subpoenas are coming out around the NoDAPL fight, bail funds around the country are being targeted—Virginia is trying to make it illegal to have a bail fund as is Georgia. There are new crackdowns on all of the pro-Palestine protests going on right now. We are seeing that the Empire is trying to go through desperate measures to protect itself and to keep itself afloat, and it's failing because so many people on so many fronts are fighting back and are in solidarity with each other

construction and limiting this instruction could work. Basically, you can't sue the Mountain Valley Pipeline in court, you can't challenge any of their permits, you can't point to all of their numerous violations and say that they need to stop construction.

What that means is that leaves direct action to stop it, and it leaves people both on the ground to stop it, but also people all across the country to stop the forces that are contributing to the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The setting for this call to action is asking people everywhere to help take up the fight and to help make sure that the companies and the banks who don't have to deal with this destruction on a day-to-day basis, who don't have to look out for their windows and see the mountain getting blown apart. They don't have to hear the excavators moving dirt at all hours of the day and night. They don't have to hear the drills going underneath the water bodies and the mountains. They don't have to deal with what they are actually doing. And bringing the fight to them, because they get to wash their hands of it because they're not here. None of the companies that are behind this pipeline are actually based in Appalachia. They never have to bear the consequences of what they're doing to communities and the land down here. Also, part of this call to action was really to have people show solidarity with folks who are facing a lot of repression. I can talk about this more. But folks on the ground who are taking direct action are receiving trumped-up charges. Lots of felonies are threats against people, they are fear tactics that are trying to scare people away from doing actions. There is an increased threat of jail time. In fact, someone who was locked down to a drill in West Virginia is currently serving two months in jail in northern West Virginia right now for his action. For being guilty of one misdemeanor, he ended up serving one month in jail.

MF: A granddad. A local granddad.

Toby: Yeah, he locked down to the drill on the Elk River, which is the same river that the West Virginia water crisis polluted. He locked down to the drill that was going underneath the Elk River, and now he's serving two months in jail. There are also eight different SLAPP suits that people are on, and those SLAPP suits are in West Virginia, they're in Virginia, they are in federal court, in state court. Sorry to give all of this exposition, but this is all to say that the fight here is feeling very dire. The situation feels very bleak. Part of that is setting the stage for this call to action. We saw a lot of people over that week throw down all across the country. Not only were there two lockdowns here in Appalachia, Madeline's and then also Mama Jules', who locked down to a helicopter two days later in a different site...

TFSR: That was badass.

Toby: Yeah, it was so cool. There were also noise demos and banner drops at the EQT headquarters and PNC headquarters in Pittsburgh. There were noise demos and demonstrations at the Wells Fargo headquarters in San Francisco, at the WGL headquarters in DC. Shout out to some of the groups like Third Act who literally put on so many noise demonstrations that people lost count in places like New Haven, Sacramento, Richmond, and Blacksburg. You saw a lot of banners and wheat pasting on lockouts that all linked together a lot of different fights, pointing out that the same banks are behind MVP as behind Cop City. They're also the same banks that are funding the genocidal regime of Israel and the genocide that's happening in Palestine. So there were a lot of actions across the country that highlighted that connection between our movements as well.

TFSR: That's super inspirational. Madeline, do you have anything you want to throw into in addition?

MF: Well, I want to highlight what Toby was saying at the beginning about how this pipeline was pushed through. Some of us who really pay attention to these nitty-gritty details of how the projects keep happening, no matter how bad we're fighting them, we can get really into the details, and the outside observers get a little bit... like your eyes can glaze over at so many details. What's important about MVP, specifically, and one reason why people showed up in solidarity so much around Turtle Island and beyond, on the one hand, people might think "Why do we care so much about one pipeline in Appalachia? Why are people in California showing up about this?" It's really important to underscore and emphasize what Toby was saying that this pipeline has been pushed through in a way that should be of major concern to anybody who is watching.

It's weird to say this—I know that probably all of us have our own feelings about the word democracy—but anyone who says they're concerned about the health of democracy and watching the way that this particular pipeline was pushed through... A national climate activist who is more looking at things on a policy level once said to me, "Yeah, it's at the point where new fossil fuel infrastructure can only be pushed through if it's directly undermining the democratic processes" that a lot of us have already lost faith in. It's an interesting place to be, to hold both of these things to be true at the same time. I don't think any pipeline should be happening. The policies and the laws are always set up to promote private interests over everyday people. I also think, even within the context of the way this thing usually happens, we're seeing an escalation of the ways that these projects are just... Even by their own metrics, this pipeline was dead in the water. It was completely caught up in lawsuits, it didn't have all its permits.

People thought we'd won, people in Appalachia were celebrating. So they can't play it straight and get these projects through anymore. That's not happening anymore. The only way they can do it is to turn the whole table over and say, "Oh,

actually, all those things we said mattered, all those laws that we said mattered, all the regulatory challenges that we said would matter, actually, none of it matters, and now they just can do it." A lot of us have had a major lack of faith in those promises for a long time anyway. No pun intended, but this is the final straw for a lot of people newer to that way of thinking. They'll tell you again and again what to do to fight in a civil way, to fight these projects in what they would describe as a civil way that there are proper channels to go through. Those of us who've been trying to fight the Dakota Access Pipeline, or fight Line 3 in northern Minnesota, we know that they're gonna put us through this dog and pony show, and we have to exhaust all the administrative remedies. But the fight to stop MVP and the way that this pipeline has come about is showing in this undeniable way what a joke all of that is, and how in the end, it's really up to us. We have each other, and we have to do things the old-fashioned way. It's inspiring to people too that in Appalachia and rural communities, in places where people are used to getting together and doing things on their own, people are rolling up their sleeves and saying, "If you're going to try to push this through, we're going to stop it in whatever way we can." There's something really beautiful and really inspiring about that to people.

And also this desperation of all of these powers that Toby is pointing to, a lot of them are the same investors, it's the same money, and they're afraid, they're on their heels. They can't even do things in the old way that they used to. They have to be more and more out about how dishonest and ethically bankrupt—I wish they were more bank—but a lot of times, they actually are bankrupt. That's the other thing. It's hard to even know where the money is that they say is going to be, where the jobs are that they say. It's all just a lie. Then it falls to everyday people to really have to stand up for what's important and what's really practically important, which is what I was saying before, this livability and thriveability. All of these profits are for the very few. I want to say on a regional note, that it reminds me of one time as a writer, when I was on a panel of other Appalachian writers in Boston. I think about all this all the time. It was packed. It was packed to the gills. And all of these people from outside of Appalachia, wanted to know—I think it had to do with Trump—what's making people tick? Why are Appalachians the way they are?

TFSR: "Why did you do this to us?" Yeah...

MF: I remember this one guy, this one sweater-vest-wearing person, an older white guy in the Q&A said, "I don't understand why people vote against their own interests." That was one thing. And also "How can we convince these basically poor country people to trust the government? Why don't they trust the government?" He asked the wrong person. I don't know what he thought I was going to say. It's an incredible thing to ask people in a part of the world that has been used as a